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Public Health Reports

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WASHINGTON, D. C., MAY 5, 1899.

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UNITED STATES.

Measures to suppress smallpox in the southeastern portion of Virginia.

The Bureau having received information that while the authorities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Newport News were using proper measures to suppress the outbreak of smallpox in those cities, necessary measures were not being taken in the contiguous districts. Passed Assistant Surgeon C. P. Wertenbaker was directed to visit these districts and to make full report upon the situation. Upon investigation he found the conditions sufficiently serious to warrant his visiting Richmond for conference with the State board of health and the governor, and by request of the latter, in conformity with the expressed desires of the State board of health, Dr. Wertenbaker was ordered to report to the governor for duty in connection with measures being taken by the State authorities for suppressing the disease.

Following is the letter of instructions to Dr. Wertenbaker:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISING SURGEON-GENERAL,
MARINE HOSPITAL SERVICE,
Washington, D. C., April 21, 1899.

SIR: By request of Honorable J. Hoge Tyler, Governor of Virginia, you are hereby detailed, by direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, for special duty in connection with the prevailing smallpox in Virginia, and will report to the governor for the purpose of rendering such assistance as may be requested by him or by the State board of health, on whose suggestion the request for your detail has been made.

You will keep the Bureau thoroughly informed of your transactions and make such recommendations to the governor or to the State board as may seem to you advisable.

You are informed that preliminary measures have been taken for regaining the control of Craney Island by the Service, and you will be notified as soon as the Service becomes in possession of that island and will be prepared to make such recommendations concerning its use by the State or local authorities as may seem to you advisable.

It is desired that the State and municipal authorities should eliminate smallpox from the State of Virginia as soon as possible.

You will render your pay and traveling expense accounts in the usual manner to the Bureau. Report transactions once a week or oftener, and at the close of your duty make full written report.

You will wire the Bureau when your services are no longer needed, when orders will be sent directing return to your station.

Respectfully, yours,

WALTER WYMAN,
Supervising Surgeon-General, U. S. M. H. S.

C. P. WERTENBAKER,
Passed Assistant Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.

Report of Passed Assistant Surgeon C. P. Wertenbaker on the smallpox situation in southeast Virginia.

NORFOLK, VA., April 30, 1899.

SIR: I have the honor to make the following report of my transactions while on special duty in connection with smallpox in Virginia, for the week ended April 29, 1899. I reported for duty to Governor J. Hoge Tyler, at Richmond, Va., April 22, 1899. I was assigned to duty with the governor's staff, and directed to confer with the State board of health, and to visit such places in the State as I saw fit. After conference with the executive committee of the State board, it was determined that I should visit Warwick County first. The governor sent a request to each of the 3 supervisors of Warwick County to meet Dr. Paulus A. Irving, secretary of the State board of health, and myself, at the Warwick Hotel, at Newport News, at noon on April 26. At that hour 2 of the supervisors, S. A. Morse, a colored man, and C. H. Burnham, a white man, met us for a discussion of the smallpox situation. Dr. J. R. Bagby, president of the Newport News board of health, was also present. We made a statement of the conditions existing in Warwick County, showing that smallpox cases were unrestrained, and that no efforts were being made to stop its spread; that these cases were constantly coming into Newport News and adjacent cities, keeping up the infection in those places. We explained the necessity for stamping out the disease at once and restricting its further spread. Our astonishment can better be imagined than described when S. A. Morse, the colored member of the board of supervisors, who seemed to be the spokesman, informed us that the supervisors did not consider the disease smallpox; that in their opinion vaccination, instead of protecting against the disease, increased its virulence, but that under any circumstances the board did not propose to take any action whatsoever, that nothing was now being done, and nothing would be done by their board. No arguments could shake them from their position; therefore,